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**Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness  
Committee**

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**HB 1983**

**Brief Description:** Providing training for park rangers employed by the state parks and recreation commission.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Finn, Appleton and Kirby.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires that all applicants for park rangers meet minimum requirements and complete the basic law enforcement academy courses offered through the Criminal Justice Training Commission.
- Excludes park rangers from membership in the law enforcement officers' and fire fighters' (LEOFF) retirement system.

**Hearing Date:** 2/17/09

**Staff:** Yvonne Walker (786-7841)

**Background:**

The State Parks and Recreation Commission is classified by statute as a "limited authority Washington law enforcement agency." The State Parks and Recreation Commission is charged, in part, with enforcing the state laws on public recreational lands. Park rangers go through a training course developed by the State Parks and Recreation Commission and are vested with police powers to enforce Washington laws.

Absent a special commission, the statute does not expressly grant park rangers permission to enforce the laws of Washington outside the territory of state recreational lands. The State Parks and Recreation Commission may adopt policies and enforce rules pertaining to the use, care, and administration of state parks and parkways. In January of 2005, the State Parks and Recreation Commission adopted a policy that requires park rangers to engage in law enforcement only

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within the boundaries of state park properties except: (1) when in fresh pursuit, following the commission of a felony (except such pursuit is not authorized for vehicle pursuits that involve speeds in excess of posted speed limits over significant distances); and (2) where specifically authorized by the Legislature.

A "limited authority Washington law enforcement agency" means any agency or unit or division of local or state government that has, as one of its functions, the apprehension or detection of persons committing infractions or violating traffic or specific criminal laws relating to limited subject areas. Agencies so designated include, but are not limited to, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Social and Health Services, the Gambling Commission, the Department of Corrections, and the State Parks and Recreation Commission.

A "general authority Washington law enforcement agency" is defined by statute as any agency or unit or division of local or state government that has, as one of its primary functions, the detection and apprehension of persons committing infractions or violating traffic or criminal laws in general. It also means any other unit of government expressly designated by statute as such an agency. General authority law enforcement agencies include the Washington State Patrol and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Such law enforcement agencies may enforce any traffic or criminal law of the state throughout the territorial boundaries of the state.

**Summary of Bill:**

All applicants for park ranger positions must be citizens of the United States who can read and write the English language. All park rangers hired after the effective date of the act are deemed law enforcement personnel (peace officers) and must successfully complete the basic law enforcement academy course or the basic law enforcement equivalency certification provided by the Criminal Justice Training Commission. The Criminal Justice Training Commission may charge the State Parks and Recreation Commission for the costs of providing training to park rangers.

Park rangers are specifically excluded from membership in the Washington law enforcement officers' and fire fighters' (LEOFF) retirement system.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 13, 2009.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.